

selfless volunteers of the Candlelighters Childhood Cancer Foundation of the Inland Empire, who give emotional help and support to the families of hundreds of children who are fighting cancer at the Loma Linda University Children's Hospital.

During the month of September, which is Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, the foundation is celebrating its 18th anniversary of working to ensure that these families do not feel isolated, frustrated, and fearful while trying to cope with the potentially devastating battle against this disease.

The Candlelighters maintain a two-bedroom house near the medical center so parents can be near their child, and provide canned food and laundry services. Among their other services, the foundation keeps a Toy Closet stocked for children who have to have special treatment at an outpatient clinic.

The highlight of the year for the Candlelighters and the children they serve is a Christmas celebration, which annually attracts 600 people and hands out more than 400 gifts for kids. A summer picnic gives these children a chance to play games and take train rides, as well.

Mr. Speaker, all of these services, and many others, are provided through donations and by volunteers. Please join me in heartfelt appreciation for these hard-working individuals during Child Cancer Awareness month.

TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM "BILL"
MEKALIAN

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 14, 1999

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to William Mekalian who passed away on January 23, 1999, in Los Angeles, California at the University of Southern California Norris Cancer Center while he was being treated for an illness.

Bill was born in Chicago, Illinois on July 10, 1933 during the Chicago World's Fair. After graduating from high school, Bill enrolled at the University of Illinois. However, he later decided that service to his country was more important and decided to join the U.S. Army in the summer of 1953 during the Korean War. After serving a few proud years in the military, Bill re-enrolled in school at Wright Junior College where he was selected to participate in the Carson Pirie Scott Executive Training Program. Bill's training motivated him to pursue career opportunities in California. It was 1961 when Bill decided to move with his parents to Fresno whereupon he secured a job with the Gottshalks Department Store. It did not take young Bill long to meet Claudette Chuchian of Bakersfield. He married Claudette, and settled in Fresno where they began their family. Bill continued his work as a sales executive, which led him to consider other business ventures including the formation of Javette Truck and Tractor. Over the years, the Javette Corporation grew into one of the leading independent heavy truck sales companies in the country.

Bill is known as a kind and generous philanthropist. He was a dedicated father and carried a strong commitment to his family. Bill's proudest moment was when he witnessed his

children graduate together from the University of Southern California. Bill was an avid toy collector. In fact, his impressive train collection rate as one of the best in the world. Several publications and a number of movie sets have featured Bill's collection. Some of his collection is displayed at the historic train museum in Old Sacramento. A leading toy train magazine recently referred to Bill as an "authority on toy trains."

Bill's civic involvement included membership to the Triple X Fraternity, an active member of the Republican National Committee, and a member of the St. Paul Church Parish Council. He is survived by his wife Claudette, his twin children: Yvette Mekalian Mandel of Laguna Hills, James Mekalian of Fresno, son-in-law Larry Mandell, and his two grandsons Alec and Ari Mandell.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Bill Mekalian for his accomplishments and service to his community. I urge my colleagues to join me in extending my condolences to the Mekalian family.

HOBERT FRANKLIN WAS A TRUE
HERO

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 14, 1999

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to ask that we all pause for a moment to remember a man we have lost. Though he is gone, he will live on in the hearts of all who knew him and be remembered for long years by many who didn't. Hobert Franklin was, for the most part, a regular guy. He enjoyed toying with cars, riding his motorcycle, and spending time with those who were important to him. He probably wouldn't have ever thought of himself as a hero, but, he was.

Hobert Franklin was a man who acted on his instincts. Last Friday night, September 3, he was at the grocery store purchasing a money order with his wife. He looked out the window and saw a man trying to drag his wife into the parking lot. His instincts told him to walk outside to try to help. Without saying a word, he stepped between the two people. His thoughts were on protecting the woman, not his own personal safety. Unfortunately, the man pulled a gun and shot Mr. Franklin. He died in an ambulance on the way to the hospital.

When remembered by friends and family the thing that comes up over and over again is the way he was always willing to help anyone who needed him. Just minutes before the shooting he ran into a friend to whom he promised help with a truck that was acting up. His nephew said that whenever anyone needed help Hobert would just drop anything he was doing. He was a good man who gave selflessly of himself.

Hobert Franklin is someone who will be missed by all of us. Those who knew him will miss spending time with him. But, even those of us who never knew him personally feel a sense of loss. We, as a society, have lost someone who was rare to begin with. Mr. Franklin made the ultimate sacrifice to help a total stranger. Hopefully we can all learn from the example that Hobert Franklin set. And, perhaps we can all try to become a little bit more like him.

CENTRAL AMERICA: INDEPENDENCE, PEACE AND PROGRESS

HON. ELTON GALLEGLY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 14, 1999

Mr. GALLEGLY. Mr. Speaker, on September 15, five of the nations of Central America will celebrate their respective independence days. As Chairman of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee, I want to congratulate the nations of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua on the occasion of this day and to call to the attention of the Members of the House the great progress which the region as a whole has made toward peace, stability and democracy.

The historic signing of the Guatemala Peace Accords two years ago ushered in a period in which for the first time in almost forty years, the entire central American region has been at peace. Even more significant is the fact that democracy has taken firm root as evidenced by the fact that every current government in the region has been elected in what have been determined to be free and fair elections by both domestic and international observers. Recently, the people of El Salvador celebrated their continued commitment to strengthening their democracy when they went to the polls in their Presidential elections and selected Francisco Flores to lead the nation into the new millennium. In November, the people of Guatemala will also have the chance to demonstrate their commitment to the democratic process when they will go to the polls in the first Presidential election since the end of the civil war and the signing of the peace accords.

The economies of these nations which were served a severe setback last Fall when Hurricane Mitch devastated the region, seem to be making a solid comeback as growth, albeit slow, is being achieved through a combination of liberalization, modernization and privatization. The peoples of the entire region should be commended for their resiliency in the wake of such a total tragedy. Further, it would appear that in general, an awareness and respect for human rights is on the increase. Nowhere has this been more obvious than in Honduras and especially in Guatemala where that nation has opened itself to a comprehensive review and scrutiny of its past human rights record. Significant U.S. financial commitment to this process as well as to programs we are funding in Nicaragua and El Salvador are clearly helping make these efforts successful. And finally, the militaries of several of these nations seem to have accepted their new roles in a democracy and under civilian leadership. This has been the case in Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua and was especially true during the post-Hurricane Mitch rebuilding effort.

This is not to say that there are not problems. Drug use and crime seem to be on the increase everywhere and nagging problems of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and infant mortality persist. But on the whole, Central America has moved beyond the crisis period of the past fifteen years and has given us great cause for optimism.

Mr. Speaker, while I speak of the important progress Central America is making in the support of democracy, I would be remiss if I failed to mention Panama as well. As the